



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Western District of New York

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PRESS RELEASE

October 22, 2004

**RE: UNITED STATES v. SHERMELL PRATHER, a/k/a "Sha", a/k/a "Mel",
JAMAR JACKSON, a/k/a "Mo",
WILLIE THOMAS, a/k/a "Mel",
SKYLER FULLILOVE, a/k/a "Worsey",
NORMAN SLOAN, a/k/a "Fatboy",
WILBERT JACKSON, a/k/a "Will",
JOSE D. ORTIZ, a/k/a "Daavee",
BRANDON PRITCHETT, a/k/a "B", and
MATTHEW TUCKER, a/k/a "China"**

United States Attorney Michael A. Battle announced today a 15-count Indictment, charging the above-named defendants, all of Rochester, NY, with a conspiracy to distribute cocaine and cocaine base "crack", in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 846 and 841, carrying a minimum penalty of 10 years imprisonment and a maximum penalty of life imprisonment, a fine of \$4,000,000, or both. The Indictment also charged several of the named defendants, including Shermell Prather, Jamar Jackson, Willie Thomas and Skyler Fullilove, with possession of firearms in furtherance of drug trafficking, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c), carrying a mandatory minimum penalty of 5 years in prison and a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. The Indictment also charges several of the named defendants, including Skyler Fullilove, Jamar Jackson, Matthew Tucker, Brandon Pritchett, Wilbert Jackson

and Willie Thomas with individual counts of cocaine base distribution on specific dates. It should be noted that the fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime . . . is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Douglas E. Gregory stated that the Indictment charges the defendants are members of a street gang which calls themselves "Murder Unit", or "MU". These individuals have conspired with one another to distribute cocaine and cocaine base in the 800 block of Joseph Avenue from approximately January 2000 to the present. The proof will show that often times, the members would sell cocaine and cocaine base from mini-mart storefronts located on Joseph Avenue, including "D and D's" mini-mart, the "Little Brooklyn" mini-mart and the "Manhattan" mini-mart. The proof will further demonstrate that various members of the gang possessed firearms in order to protect themselves and the drug trade in this area. Search warrants executed on the night of September 21, 2004 resulted in additional seizures of narcotics and firearms from several locations linked to the defendants.

The Indictment was a coordination of prosecutorial efforts between the United States Attorney's Office and the Monroe County District Attorney's Office targeting street level gangs involved in narcotics sales and related violence. The investigative efforts were the culmination of an investigation on the part of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, under the direction of Resident Agent in Charge Michael Lawandus , the Rochester Police Department, under the direction of Police

Chief Robert Duffy, the Drug Enforcement Administration, under the direction of Resident Agent in Charge David T. Zon, the New York State Police, under the direction of Staff Inspector Mark T. Fischer, and the United States Marshal's Service, under the direction of Marshal Peter Lawrence.

The evidence was presented to the Grand Jury by Douglas E. Gregory, Assistant United States Attorney, who will handle the trial of the case.

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